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THE SITUATION IN SANTO DOMINGO

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In the middle of January of this year, 1905, I had occasion to go to Santo Domingo. In the course of my stay there I investigated, as far as I was able, the affairs of the republic and made more or less of a study of the resources of the island. Without some such examination, I feel safe in asserting, it is absolutely impossible for one to understand the position or the motives which actuated our government in the execution of the protocol of January 20-21, 1905, and the situation which not only justified the agreement but made it necessary.

To comprehend the political situation, we must be familiar also with the conditions that then existed or which had previously existed in the Republic of Santo Domingo, or "República Dominicana," as it has been known for the past six decades. This little island, from the time of its discovery, has been a hotbed of turmoil and the centre of strife. It is about the same size as Ireland, and has caused as much trouble. First under one government, then under another, the seat of the first Spanish government in the new world, the resort of buccaneers and pirates for quite a time, subject to the raids of Drake or any other enterprising English captain who fancied Spanish gold would be acceptable to his sovereign; it has had a notorious history for centuries. Before the days of the ocean cable we did not hear so much of it. In 1869 or 1870, however, General Grant, who was then President of the United States, had his attention called to its wonderful resources and made an effort to obtain control of it. His action had the warm approval and hearty support of the existing government. General Grant was much impressed with the extraordinary value to the United States of its products and crops. He clearly saw that it would round out our country by giving it an area in the tropics and supplying our people with articles of which

we are large consumers, but which had heretofore been grown on foreign soil. Its climate and proximity make fruits and vegetables available all the year round to the population of the eastern part of the United States.

President Grant undertook to have the island annexed to the United States. It was a wide departure from our traditional policy, and the proposition naturally encountered a great deal of opposition. He first sent down one of his secretaries to make a report. That gentleman came back very enthusiastic about the island. Indeed, nearly everybody who has visited Santo Domingo has come back enthusiastic about its climatic conditions, its resources and its possibilities.

In furtherance of General Grant's design, sometime in 1870, a treaty was signed and sent to the United States Senate for ratification. I do not suppose that any similar proposition in a matter of such character, in which no great interests were involved, ever stirred up more antagonism and animosity than the attempted ratification of that treaty. Mr. Sumner, whom the success of the North in the late war had made the autocrat of the Senate, accused President Grant of all manner of corrupt motives. The attack made upon the administration came like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. The opposition was without any justification whatever, and time has failed to show any warrant for it. This was the fact, and that the motives of President Grant and his cabinet were as altruistic as are the motives of President Roosevelt and his cabinet to-day, was proven by the report of the commission which was appointed in the course of the next few months. It consisted of the late ex-Senator Wade, Andrew D. White and Samuel G. Howe, the husband of Julia Ward Howe. They reported as enthusiastically as had Babcock, the first investigator; they also were strongly in favor of making some sort of an arrangement with Santo Domingo with a view to its ultimate annexation. However, the treaty was again rejected in 1871.

At that time I believe the indebtedness of Santo Domingo was only about \$1,500,000. Since then the debt has continued to increase not only in the amount due to citizens of the United States, but in the indebtedness to citizens of other countries. To-day it is about \$32,000,000. The creditors of the Republic, however, have expressed a very commendable desire to settle for some \$22,000,000.

The present arrangement by President Roosevelt is purely a business question. I do not think that we should delude ourselves with the idea that we are international philanthropists either in our extension or our maintenance of the Monroe doctrine. The Monroe doctrine is only in its infancy. It was promulgated originally for our own self-protection and for our own interest; and it is just as necessary to extend it to-day for those reasons as for any alleged good we may confer upon mankind in general or upon the Spanish-American peoples in particular.

The condition which existed in the Dominican Republic was one of continuous revolution. In fact there has been a regular series of insurrections. They have been more theatrical than real. The effect, however, has been to prevent the introduction of American capital, to a very large extent, for individual enterprises in the island, and has hindered the development of its mining and agricultural interests. The island is enormously rich. Several crops a year may be raised. The soil is rich and fertile along the rivers. The cacao and coffee are excellent and require little care. The tobacco varies very much in different districts. I have had some very good cigars made by the natives in the hills from tobacco of their own growth. It is true the tobacco all sells in Hamburg as the same grade, but it is equally true that after the Spanish-American war began large quantities of it was sent to Key West and made up and sold as Havana tobacco. Some of it is difficult to distinguish. The cattle are fair and some business is done in the export of hides. The pineapples, bananas, plantains, cocoanuts and oranges are most abundant.

I can only allude to the mineral wealth. It is unbounded. The Spaniard took untold gold out of the country, and while the mother lode from which the placer gold is washed down has never been discovered owing to the inaccessibility of the country, there are numerous veins of high grade quartz ore. Many precious stones have been found. Amber has lately been found in unlimited quantities. In fact it is the only place in the world where it can be obtained to-day outside the Baltic district.

All the more valuable woods are found in large quantities in the interior, but there are no means of getting them out. The island has been absolutely unscratched, one might say, except along the coast. It only awaits a stable government to bring about the introduction of a large amount of American capital.

I arrived at Puerto Plata in Santo Domingo a few days after the protocol had been signed, and had an opportunity to talk while the matter was fresh to many of the leading merchants and officials of the republic, as well as to Admiral Sigsbee and Commissioner Dillingham who were about to take over the Monte Christi custom house. They expressed themselves very favorably about the outlook for the island. The merchants and leading citizens were, and still are, very strongly in favor of the protocol and treaty. They impressed me as being a very frank and honorable body of men. It is needless to say that they were, and are still, strenuously opposed to all these revolutions of which we read so much. They interfere with business and destroy property. The inhabitants are, with very few exceptions, white.

One must not confuse the Republica Dominicana with the black Republic of Haiti as it is depicted by St. John. In Haiti a language which passes for French is spoken, and in the Dominican Republic the tongue spoken is the customary American-Spanish. The habits, manners and customs of the two republics cannot be compared. The division of the island into two countries was owing to the difference of race and refusal of the white Dominican to be governed by the black Haitian. It is true here, as in all other of the West Indian countries, that the half-bred negroes are the leaders of the revolutions.

It is not to be forgotten in the discussion of our relations with Santo Domingo, that we are not taking possession of the island or are establishing a quasi-protectorate over it with a view to future territorial aggrandizement or anything of that kind. We are entering into this agreement, which has been so much talked about in the newspapers during the last two months, at the express request of the Santo Domingo government, for its own self-preservation and for the preservation of the rights of our creditors. It is strictly in accord with the Monroe doctrine. By taking the initiative we will avoid any complications with European cabinets, who sooner or later are bound to act in the matter. To prevent their seizing the custom houses and obtaining a foothold in the West Indies, we must act first. This President Roosevelt has done. It now only needs sufficient information on the part of the Senate for that body to support him.

It was essential that something be done. The convention be-

tween the countries had terminated January 31, 1898. The protocol and agreement entered into January 31, 1903, under which Judge Gray, John C. Carlisle and Manuel de J. Galvan, as arbitrators, had awarded an American corporation about four and a half million of dollars on July 14, 1904, had already put the Dominican custom houses, on the northern coast of the republic, under the control of United States officers. The government of Santo Domingo had defaulted in the payment of the instalments directed by the award. A systematic effort was being made to divert the importation of merchandise at the ports of entry controlled by the United States. The award threatened to become another creditor's dream.

Until the Spanish-American war it was generally the practice of the United States government to ignore the violation of the contractual relations of our people by foreign countries and their citizens. Since then, and under the present administration, as well as under the preceding administration, that policy has been materially changed. The proceedings that have taken place in Santo Domingo are one step further in the right direction. They strengthen the position of our citizens abroad; they clearly intimate to foreign nations that we will not permit our own citizens to be imposed upon, and that our government will protect them in their contracts.

In Santo Domingo a revolution does not mean any difference in political principles or anything of that sort; it simply means that a certain number of "citizens" plot together in order to seize the government and get the officers and emoluments that are incidental thereto. To have a successful revolution it is essential to secure funds and the easiest way to get them is to seize the custom houses. Therefore it has been the practice for the leaders of a revolution in Santo Domingo to lay in wait behind a coast town, which happens to be a port of entry, and to make a raid on the custom house just before a New York or another foreign steamer was due, for the purpose of collecting the duties on the cargo. In that way they obtained the sinews for their insurrection. If they were not successful in their revolutionary movement, it was easy for them to make some sort of a compromise with their opponents. They would be given offices, or even the merchants would sometimes pay blackmail to quiet the disturbances and disorders produced by these alleged "patriots." It is that very fact, the seizure of the custom houses in these revolutions, that is likely to cause so much complication.

Moreover, under the various contracts and agreements which have been entered into by the Santo Domingo government from time to time with citizens of various countries, the revenues derived from certain custom houses have been specifically pledged for the payment of the interest on the obligations of the country due to foreigners. If we ourselves do not take possession of the custom houses and undertake the financial administration of the island through them, some other nation will step in and do it. The tribunal at The Hague has very properly decided that the creditors who are diligent in enforcing their claims shall be given certain preferences. If we do not push our claim we will see this island, which is clearly within the zone of the Monroe doctrine, pass into the temporary possession of another power to satisfy the claims of the citizens of that power. This is most undesirable. It is contrary to the principles that our government has enunciated. There is no reason why we should not enter into the proposed treaty.

The power of the President to make such an arrangement with a foreign nation is unquestioned. I do not know of anything that would better illustrate the exercise of this power than the dealings of our presidents with the Indians for the past one hundred years. The executive officers of the government have repeatedly, on their own responsibility, made treaties with the Indians. As far as I know from the records, the Senate has never even requested any documents connected with the making of such treaties, although of course it has ratified them in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. The question had never been raised before it was advanced by some of the opposition senators. In a recent case (reported in 170 U. S. Reports, 23), "The New York Indians *vs.* the United States," the Supreme Court of the United States decided that certain amendments to a treaty, passed by the Senate, which were not contained in the original treaty and did not subsequently appear in the President's proclamation of it, formed no part of it whatever. That is a purely technical interpretation of the right of the President under the provision of the constitution giving him power to make treaties with and by the consent of the Senate. It is ample justification, from even a legal standpoint, for the President to enter into negotiations, to carry them on and to make such provisions as he sees fit pending the ratification of the treaty.